United Nations S/PV.4871

Security Council

Fifty-eighth year

Provisional

4871st meeting

Monday, 24 November 2003, 10.20 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	Chile	Mr. Muñoz
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Guinea	Mr. Boubacar Diallo
	Mexico	Mr. Pujalte
	Pakistan	Mr. Khalid
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	Spain	Ms. Menéndez
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

Central African Region

Letter dated 10 November 2003 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2993/1077)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

03-62811 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Central African Region

Letter dated 10 November 2003 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/1077)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Italy and Rwanda in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so agreed.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 21 November 2003 from the Chargé d'affaires of the Republic of the Congo to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "In my capacity as Chairman of the CEEAC Group at the United Nations, I have the honour to request that the Security Council extend an invitation to His Excellency Mr. Amadou Kébé, Ambassador, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, to address the Council under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure in the course of the Council's consideration of the agenda item 'Central African Region'".

That letter will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2003/1115.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 to Mr. Amadou Kébé.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Amadou Kébé to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to the Deputy Secretary-General for Political Affairs of the Economic Community of Central African States, Mr. Nelson Cosme.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Nelson Cosme to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2003/1077, which contains a letter dated 10 November 2003 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council transmitting the interim report of the multidisciplinary assessment mission to the Central African region.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kalomoh.

Mr. Kalomoh: It is my pleasure to be here today as the Council considers the Secretary-General's letter dated 10 November 2003 addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/1077), by which the Secretary-General submitted to the Council the interim

report of the multidisciplinary assessment mission to the Central African subregion.

Last June, I had the privilege to head the multidisciplinary assessment mission that the Secretary-General dispatched to the Central African subregion pursuant to a request by the Security Council contained in the final paragraph of its presidential statement of 31 October 2002 (S/PRST/2002/31) to explore ways to implement

> "a comprehensive, integrated and resolute approach to the issues of peace, security and development in Central Africa."

I am glad to report that the mission was well received in all 11 member States of the Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS). We met with heads of State and of Government and with other senior Government officials. We also held extensive consultations with leaders of main political parties, representatives of civil society and of non-governmental organizations, business and religious leaders and members of the diplomatic community in each of the countries we visited, as well as United Nations agencies, programmes and peace-building and peacekeeping missions.

The mission submitted its report to the Secretary-General on 10 September 2003. In line with its mandate, the mission identified the priority needs and challenges in various areas in the subregion, including peace and security, economic and social development, humanitarian affairs, human rights, HIV/AIDS, subregional institutions, United Nations activities in the subregion, and regional integration.

The mission's report stressed the need for the United Nations to help the subregion implement subregional policies and to support efforts directed at addressing cross-cutting challenges, including the promotion of good governance.

The mission emphasized that, as a result of the interlinkages between poverty and conflict, it is essential for the United Nations and its agencies to develop a holistic and integrated approach to the problem of Central Africa in order to address conflicts at their core and to enhance the ability of national, subregional and international actors to be more proactive in identifying and preventing future threats. As indicated in his letter to the President of the Security Council, the Secretary-General is in general agreement with the assessment made by the mission. However, the Secretary-General believes that there is a need to undertake further examination of the root causes of the conflicts that have plagued some of the countries in the subregion. Thus, he has requested a thorough review of United Nations programmes with a view to enhancing their coherence and effectiveness.

With regard to the strong desire expressed by most Government leaders in the subregion, for an enhanced United Nations presence, including through the establishment of a United Nations office headed by a special representative, the Secretary-General has indicated in his letter to the President of the Council that there are already a number of United Nations structures in the subregion, including three offices headed by special representatives of the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General noted that there are also numerous initiatives that encompass a larger number of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) member States. Against this background, the Secretary-General has proposed to appoint a special envoy who would be available as required to work closely on political issues with Governments in the subregion and who would also interface with United Nations entities involved in development and humanitarian activities in the Central African subregion. We stressed in the mission report that while the restoration and consolidation of lasting peace in some of the countries of the Central African subregion remain the primary responsibility of the Governments and peoples of the subregion, the United Nations and the rest of the international community should continue to be supportive in order for the peace to be sustainable.

We therefore wish to call upon the international community to continue to support the efforts of the ECCAS countries so as to promote sustainable peace and development and enable them to effectively curb widespread circulation of weapons and gangs of mercenaries in the subregion. In this connection, the Security Council's continued attention to the developments in the Central African subregion — which has significantly contributed to creating greater awareness of and understanding for the need for immediate and effective action to stabilize the situation in the area and which led to the dispatch of the mission to the Central African subregion — is essential and should be continued.

It is also important for the international community to support the economic stabilization of the Central African countries, which are emerging from conflict and embarking on the road to democratic reform.

As stressed in our report, we strongly believe that policies to promote respect for human rights and the rule of law and the development of inclusive and responsive Governments would facilitate the consolidation of peace and stability in the countries of the Central African subregion.

The Central African subregion has been blessed with enormous human and natural resources. Thus, a climate of sustainable peace backed by constructive national and subregional policies and supportive international cooperation would help direct those resources towards the improvement of conditions for the people of the subregion.

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I wish to reassure the participants gathered here today that the United Nations will continue to work with the countries and the peoples of the Central African subregion to help them build a more peaceful and prosperous subregion.

The President: I thank the Assistant Secretary-General for his briefing.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (spoke in French): Once again I would like to extend the appreciation of my delegation to the Secretary-General for having sent out the multidisciplinary assessment mission to the Central African subregion last June. I also thank him for having made the report of that mission available to us now. I thank Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his eloquent introduction to the mission's report.

Before offering any comments on the report I would like to congratulate Mr. Kalomoh and his team for the energetic manner in which the mission tackled its mandate and for the very serious approach taken therein. Like other countries in Central Africa, Cameroon attached fundamental importance to the work given to the mission. We have been awaiting the recommendations of the Secretary-General with great interest.

The representative of the Republic of the Congo currently serves as Chairman of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and I will leave it to the representative of ECCAS to review the various issues raised in the report. I associate myself with everything he will say on our behalf.

I would confine myself at this point to certain aspects of the mandate of the mission. The mission was asked to determine what the main priority needs and problems were in the subregion and to hold consultations with Governments to determine how best to strengthen cooperation with the United Nations in order to meet the needs of the Central African subregion. It was also asked to determine measures to be taken at the subregional level by ECCAS and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC), with assistance from the United Nations system. Lastly, it was asked to make recommendations on the best ways in which the international community could support programmes aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of subregional efforts and mechanisms.

As can be seen from reading the report, the mandate was discharged and discharged well. But one point remains that relates to the outcome of the consultations with member States on how to strengthen cooperation with the United Nations. At the talks, according to our information, the countries of Central Africa strongly urged the introduction of a United Nations political presence in the subregion through the establishment of a subregional office that could specifically facilitate, inter alia, the integrated, overall approach that the Security Council recommended.

The report before us, in its observations section, does not resolve that concern that was so strongly voiced by the Governments of the subregion, and that has given rise to a feeling of disquiet, indeed, of disappointment, in the subregion. Why does the mission — after devoting an entire section to the question of a United Nations political presence in Central Africa — neglect that issue in the recommendations made in its final observations? Perhaps some clues to an explanation could be found in reading the letter of transmission from the Secretary-General. But reading that letter simply increases the sense of disquiet and disappointment that I mentioned before. The Secretary-General's letter begins by suggesting that a United Nations political presence in Central Africa is something called for by "most" of the subregion. In other words, to further clarify, the need for a United Nations political presence is not something that was expressed by all of the members of

the subregion, by all the members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) — because that group essentially is Central Africa.

I would be happy to hear from the Assistant Secretary-General who led the mission how many of the countries he met with objected to the idea of an enhanced United Nations presence in Central Africa through the establishment of an office there. I would appreciate his reply in his capacity as head of that mission. While awaiting that response, I would like to say that — given the information that I have — I believe the request for an increased United Nations presence comes from the membership of our subregion as a whole. The request was made explicitly in certain documents, some of which are available at the United Nations. I refer, in particular, to the deliberations of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and I believe our President will revert to that question. Thus, from the information we have, Central Africa unanimously desires an increased United Nations presence in the form of a subregional office. So, for that reason, it is not quite proper to say that "most" of the countries supported the proposal. That was my first point.

My second point, in rereading the Secretary-General's letter, is that he says that while it is true that the Central African States want an increased United Nations presence, there are problems, one of which is the proliferation of offices and special representatives in the subregion. That is true. But I would note that Central Africa does not have a monopoly on having a profusion of United Nations offices — that is the case in other subregions. However, that has not prevented, the Secretary-General, at least in the recent past, from setting up an institution or an office such as the one proposed by the Central African subregion in this case.

In addition, it bears remembering that the offices in question are national offices, national structures, and they deal with very specific issues, not with regional issues as a whole. So those offices and their leadership cannot really help in advocating the integrated, global and comprehensive approach that is needed in Central Africa. I can give you as an example some of the offices which I am aware, such as an office in the Central African Republic that deals with Central African Republic issues; an office in Burundi that deals with issues relating to Burundi; and a mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that deals with matters relating to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There is no structure for Central Africa as a subregion.

The Secretary-General says in his letter that the person he would appoint would work in collaboration with his special representatives in the subregion. Now, who are those special representatives of the Secretary-General in our subregion? We do not know them. We know that there is one representative charged with a very specific mandate: the preparations for the international conference on the Great Lakes region. But, as far as concerns the Central African subregion — made up the members of ECCAS — as far as we are aware, we do not have a special representative for our subregion.

There is a third point I would like to make about the Secretary-General's letter. There is a reference to certain circumstances that could foster the establishment of a regional office: specifically, he refers to the need for a study on the causes of conflict in Central Africa. But we would question the advisability of such an exercise for two reasons. First, Central Africa itself has carried out a study within the context of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The outcome of that study was published in a United Nations document (A/50/474), which is available. So why should a new study be carried out? Secondly, it should be pointed out that the Secretary-General himself, a few years later, published a report on the causes of conflict in Africa, which dealt with the entire issue. We cannot understand what new insight the study to be carried out is supposed to provide.

The last point underscored in the Secretary-General's letter — which is seen to effectively prevent any discussion of the creation of a United Nations office at the moment — relates to preparations under way for a conference on the Great Lakes region. One would therefore have to wait until all of that is finished, especially since there are ECCAS countries that are parties involved in this conference as well.

But I think that here also we have to distinguish between two things. The conference on the Great Lakes covers one very specific subregion, even though three or four countries in our subregion are affected by what happens there. But in no way does the Great Lakes conference concern the Economic Community of Central African States. I think we have to draw that

distinction. Central Africa has its own identity; it should not just be hooked onto other entities.

I apologize if I have spoken at some length, but I am saying this so that the members of the Council, who called for this study and gave a mandate to the mission, will be fully informed about what has happened and is happening.

Just one last comment. The report before us has been available since 10 September, but as far as members of the Council are concerned, I believe it is only this month that we were able to have in English a report that deals with basically a French-speaking subregion. That did not facilitate the study of the report in our capitals, and that is one of the reasons why most of the ministers that might have attended this debate were not able to come.

Central Africa has come to the Security Council to say exactly what Central Africa is and what it hopes for from the Security Council and the United Nations. Central Africa has come to request, and it has requested, of the United Nations that it be present permanently, not just on an ad hoc basis, that the United Nations have a permanent presence in Central Africa. Central Africa hopes that the United Nations will do its utmost to ensure that a positive response can be provided to that request, a request made and repeated on good grounds, I believe.

We might have expected financial factors to be somewhat of a hindrance. Central Africa is saying that the United Nations does in fact have sufficient existing resources and structures. It is a question of seeing how those existing structures and resources can be used to ensure a permanent United Nations presence.

My delegation hopes that at the end of our deliberations, the statement that will be negotiated in the next few days and then adopted may reconfirm the need for a comprehensive, agreed-on and integrated approach. It is our hope that the Council will take note of and be pleased by the interest shown by Central Africa in having a United Nations presence there and will welcome the proposal by the heads of State.

And lastly, it is our hope that the Secretary-General might be requested to see how the request can be met within existing resources. Experience shows us that our requests can be handled swiftly and effectively. Perhaps it could be specified just when the Secretary-General would report to the Council on how this matter has been handled. As a mission has already been carried out, three months or six months might be appropriate, but in any case, a date must be set.

I apologize for having spoken at such length, but I do believe that this matter is particularly important. Central Africa wants to work with the United Nations. Central Africa is requesting, imploring the United Nations to have a permanent presence in the subregion, so that it can monitor closely what is happening there and provide assistance on an ongoing basis to the States in the subregion.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the mission directed by the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Kalomoh, for the assessment contained in the report before us.

My country shares the mission's analysis as to the regional nature of certain problems in Central Africa in a variety of areas — cross-border movements of armed groups, movements of armies, child soldiers, refugees and displaced persons, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, illegal exploitation of natural resources and insufficient economic integration of the region. It is therefore useful and necessary for the States of the region and the international community to coordinate appropriate responses.

Security issues, of course, are of a priority nature. Efforts of the international community with regard to peacekeeping should be supported and coordinated, especially those of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the African Union force in Burundi, or of the Central African Economic Monetary Community in the Central African Republic. It also seems to us that the initiatives to better coordinate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants in the regional framework — especially those of the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme — should of course take fully into account the regional dimension.

It seems to us also that countries of the subregion and the international community should exert every effort to combat arms trafficking. That is why we wish the Council to soon set up a monitoring mechanism to improve application of the embargo on arms and on support to armed groups in the east of the Congo.

Grave humanitarian problems of the subregion recalled by the mission — especially the considerable

number of displaced persons and refugees and challenges to public health posed by the AIDS pandemic — are equally urgent. They could only benefit from cooperation in the subregional framework. The sustained return of the subregion to peace and stability also requires action for development and for combating poverty. As the mission has stressed, if they are to take advantage of the economic potential of their subregion, the States of the subregion must develop true economic regional cooperation involving the free movement of persons and goods and the development of communications infrastructures.

Let me turn now to the issue of structures. We feel that, with respect to structures, the Secretary-General's proposal to appoint a special envoy to assist the countries of the subregion and provide liaison with United Nations agencies should be considered in the context of the international conference on the Great Lakes region. I note that our colleague Ambassador Belinga-Eboutou has reminded us that there is no precise equation between countries participating in the conference on the Great Lakes and all those that broadly constitute the Central African region. It may be true that there is no strict equivalence, but there are more than four such countries. Some would urge the participation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's neighbours in the first round of the conference, but the conference will undoubtedly have a significant impact on cooperation between many countries of the region and on their relations with the United Nations. That is why we believe that, given the importance of the conference, it is logical in this context that we consider the modalities of the United Nations involvement in the subregion and the need to develop structures, as necessary.

We are, of course, very attentive to all we are told by the Secretary-General and to what the other members of the Security Council will say today, but I wished to offer that thought this morning because I wanted to convey our perception of the issue at this stage.

Mr. Diallo (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): This meeting on the situation in Central Africa, in connection with the report of the multidisciplinary assessment mission, is extremely timely. It complements the views and observations we heard just four days ago, on 20 November, on the situation in the Great Lakes region, of which several countries of Central Africa are part.

I should like to compliment the Secretary-General on the high quality of his report before us and to thank Mr. Kalomoh for introducing it. The report clearly shows that the situation in Central Africa is made extremely unstable by local, external and transborder issues; the solution to which will require a regional approach. Illicit arms and drug trafficking and the proliferation of militias are just some of the elements that rightly put peace and security at the very heart of the concerns of the States of the region. According to some estimates, seven of 11 countries are either in conflict or in post-conflict situations.

To deal with security problems in general, Central Africa now has the Protocol on the Council for Peace and Security and the Mutual Assistance Pact, signed in Malabo on 24 February 2000. We are pleased to see that the countries of the region have increasingly committed themselves in recent months to the peaceful settlement of their disputes. I wish to note a few examples of this.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Government of National Unity and Transition is addressing the urgent tasks of recovery. The Central African Republic is pursuing, albeit not without problems, the crucial process of national reconciliation. The recent agreement between the Government of Burundi and the Forces pour la défense de la démocratie is part of that same dynamic of peace. Such considerable progress follows on the success in Angola, which suffered many years of conflict and their incalculable consequences. Thus, the prospects for political change in Central Africa are good. That is why we believe it necessary, if these prospects are to be realized, to maintain and strengthen the international partnership with the region.

My delegation believes that the efforts of the States of the region undoubtedly reflect their political will to build a secure environment conducive to development. A regional approach to recovery must be further consolidated and supported by an international mechanism for assistance. We believe that a common multidisciplinary structure with sufficient resources would best meet the needs of the region. We note with interest the Secretary-General's intention to appoint a special envoy for Central Africa to address political issues and relations with the United Nations system and to support with concrete measures the capacities of the Economic Community of Central African States and other existing mechanisms. We also welcome the

thorough review requested by the Secretary-General of the programmes of the United Nations with a view to enhancing their effectiveness and coherence.

In conclusion, we appeal to the States of the region to maintain their efforts to eliminate threats to peace and security by pursuing their courageous, essential and often painful efforts to promote human rights, combat impunity, reorganize their judiciary systems and liberalize their economies, especially along the borders.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation welcomes your presidency of today's meeting, Sir. We are also grateful to Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh and to the representative of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) for their briefings.

We appreciate the work done by the multidisciplinary assessment mission. In its report, the mission makes many useful recommendations on the search for solutions to the problems of Central Africa. We believe that these recommendations must be implemented as soon as possible and we hope that the Security Council will give them serious consideration.

As the mission's report points out, Central Africa is rich in natural resources, yet one of the world's least developed regions. In 7 of the 11 countries visited, over 50 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line. A major cause of this situation are the armed conflicts that have long plagued the region. Over the past decade, many countries of Central Africa have undergone armed conflicts of varied intensity. Some continue to suffer such conflicts or face the heavy burden of post-conflict peace-building.

Putting an end to conflict, achieving national reconciliation and advancing on the path of sustainable development represent major challenges to the Central African countries and the international community. We believe that we must make efforts in the following three areas to address the issues of Central Africa.

First, the efforts of the countries and people concerned are key. We are pleased to note that the peace process in Angola is being consolidated. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is developing positively. The peace and reconciliation process in Burundi has made progress, and the situation in the Central African Republic is also improving steadily. All these achievements are inseparable from the unremitting efforts made by the Governments and peoples concerned. Events have proven that there can be no lasting peace without the political will of the countries concerned; no outside force can replace their role.

Secondly, regional organizations must do more to help. Many countries in Central Africa have similar cultures and historical backgrounds. Conflict in one country can easily spread to neighbouring countries, impacting on the entire region. Therefore, addressing the issues of Central Africa must begin with a regional perspective, using a comprehensive strategy. That is precisely what the region and subregion concerned can do best. In recent years, organizations such as the African Union, ECCAS and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC) have taken positive measures to resolve armed conflicts in various countries, stabilize the political situation and promote integration. All those efforts have had excellent results. We hope that those organizations will take into consideration the specific characteristics of their region and continue to play an important role in promoting long-term peace and stability in the region.

Thirdly, the international community must provide broad support. Over the years, the United Nations, through peacekeeping operations in the Central African region, peace-building support offices and special envoys, has actively helped the countries of the region in their peacekeeping and rehabilitation efforts. We support a greater role of the United Nations in order to achieve peace and development in Central Africa and to help the various countries and regional organizations in their efforts for capacity-building and conflict prevention. We also support the proposal of the Secretary-General to appoint a special envoy for Central Africa. From the report of the mission, we can see that, as a result of inadequate financial and technical support, it is hard for some Central African countries to maintain their hard-won peace.

We call upon the international community, especially Africa's development partners, to increase their political support to this region, especially economic and financial support, so as to help the countries concerned to eradicate poverty and to prevent and treat AIDS.

As a friend of Africa, China closely follows the situation in Central Africa. China has duly made efforts to help the countries concerned to end their armed

conflict and achieve economic development. China has taken part in the peace operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and has provided logistical support to the peace force of the African Union deployed in Burundi. Through bilateral channels, China has also provided economic support to some Central African countries. We expect to strengthen cooperation with Central African countries in all aspects in order to make our due contribution to achieving lasting peace, stability and development in the region.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): First, I would like to thank Mr. Kalomoh for his briefing. I would also like to associate myself with the statement to be made later in this discussion by the European Union presidency.

The informative report of the Secretary-General underscores the fact that despite encouraging developments, the Central African region is still affected by crises and conflicts. We share the Secretary-General's analysis that a subregional approach offers the best chance for a comprehensive strategy that takes into account the complex and diverse root causes of the conflicts. The peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi will, hopefully, have an impact on regional stabilization, despite the many challenges that need to be met. In that respect, we regret that the multidisciplinary assessment mission to the Central African subregion was unable to visit the Central African Republic. Despite some steps in the right direction, the situation there remains fragile and requires the Security Council's continued attention.

The subregional approach, in our view, means, first and foremost, strengthening existing subregional mechanisms. Let me highlight that with two examples. The first is the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), which enjoys the broadest membership of countries in the subregion and should therefore be in an ideal position to develop regional strategies. Like other subregional organizations however, ECCAS suffers from inadequate capacities. Another example is the lack of effective regional capacities for conflict resolution in the Great Lakes region. The United Nations, the African Union and individual African countries play an important role in mediating between parties to conflicts and in peacekeeping in the Great Lakes region mainly because there are no adequate subregional structures in place.

One of the outcomes of the Great Lakes region conference will be programmes and action plans for regional cooperation and development. We believe that such initiatives should also aim at strengthening existing mechanisms and organizations and at furthering cooperation between them.

It is for the countries in the Central African subregion itself to establish clear guidelines and to avoid duplication of efforts. A clear division of labour and responsibilities between the regional organizations, as well as between them and the African Union, would be most useful. Also cooperation between the subregional organizations and the United Nations would undoubtedly benefit from such streamlining efforts.

Likewise, the United Nations itself must avoid duplication of mechanisms. It is difficult to see how a mandate for an additional special envoy for Central Africa could avoid overlapping with the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, which the Security Council has just renewed for another year. We would therefore prefer for the United Nations missions in the Central African subregion to identify possible areas of cooperation aimed at effectively addressing cross-cutting issues. Cross-cutting issues are trafficking in small arms and light weapons, the proliferation of armed groups and programmes for disarmament, demobilization and the successful reintegration of former combatants into regular armies or civilian life. These are all key issues for most of the countries emerging from conflict.

The Multicountry Demobilization and Reintegration Programme (MDRP) is an initiative to address that multifaceted problem. Germany's contribution to the programme amounts to 30 million euros, which is roughly $35 million.

MDRP has substantial means at its disposal and stands ready to fund projects in addition to the quick impact projects for demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers that have already been put into place.

But while MDRP follows a pragmatic and flexible approach, national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes are a prerequisite. We urge the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi to establish their national programmes. In this respect, it is an encouraging sign that the transitional Government of the Democratic

Republic of the Congo has formed a technical coordination and planning committee to this end.

Mr. Khalid (Pakistan): We wish to thank Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Kalomoh for introducing the interim report of the multidisciplinary mission to the Central African subregion.

Pakistan supports the United Nations efforts aimed at developing a comprehensive and integrated subregional approach to the issues of peace, security and development in Central Africa. We have repeatedly stated this in the context of the Great Lakes region and the region of West Africa.

While Central Africa is potentially one of the richest subregions in Africa, it is at the same time mired in armed conflicts, instability, underdevelopment and poverty. The solutions to some of these cross-cutting and transborder issues need to be found through a comprehensive and holistic approach, as stated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2003/1077). In taking such an approach, the root causes of conflict and instability, as well as their symptoms and effects, have to be addressed.

The report identifies some of the most important priority needs and challenges facing the Central African subregion and makes pertinent observations. We would welcome follow-up recommendations and action by the Secretariat on how to address some of the key areas identified in the report.

I would like to take this opportunity to make a few comments on the report and the observations therein.

First, we believe that the international community has as much of a responsibility and interest in the restoration and consolidation of lasting peace in Central Africa as do the Governments and peoples of the subregion.

Secondly, the issue of poverty and underdevelopment, which is the root cause of conflict and instability in that subregion, needs to be addressed on a priority basis. We support the need for a more proactive approach to this issue, but the solutions should be global, not local.

Thirdly, humanitarian relief and reconstruction assistance must be stepped up in the region. This is the necessary first step in the recovery and rehabilitation of the countries and peoples affected by conflict and instability.

Fourthly, addressing health issues and pandemics affecting the region, especially HIV/AIDS, should also be accorded high priority. This problem, unless addressed, poses as much, if not greater a threat to the countries and peoples of the subregion.

Fifthly, in supporting good governance in the countries of the subregion, strengthening institutional capacities and the justice systems must be accorded high priority.

Sixthly, in addressing peace and security challenges in the subregion, we need, inter alia, to address the issue of the financing of the illegal exploitation of natural resources and drugs in the countries of the region, which may be in part financing arms flows and mercenary and militia activities, as well as perpetuating the conflict. Last week, in the debate on the Great Lakes region, our delegation called for the establishment of a monitoring mechanism to check the illegal exploitation of natural resources and arms flows in the region. The monitoring mechanism, once established for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, can be gradually extended to the entire region to cover the issue of drugs as well as mercenaries.

Finally, the work of the multidisciplinary approach of the Secretariat must be supported and complemented by an integrated and joint response from the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. Here again I would refer the Council to our proposal to establish ad hoc composite committees of the three principal organs of the United Nations to address these cross-cutting issues in a comprehensive manner.

Mr. Atieh (Syria) (*spoke in Arabic*): We appreciate the holding of this meeting devoted to Central Africa and we highly appreciate the efforts of Mr. Kalomoh, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, who presided over the United Nations assessment mission in Central Africa. We are grateful for the detailed report he has presented to the Council on this subject.

We fully agree with the comments made by the mission to the effect that we must face the challenges arising for the region, which go well beyond the national borders of the States of the region and which call for a subregional integrated approach

supplementing national solutions and providing a sound foundation for such solutions.

My delegation has likewise taken note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/1077) that proposes appointing a special envoy to address political matters with the States of the subregion, who would cooperate with United Nations agencies and mechanisms dealing with humanitarian and development affairs for Central Africa.

A few days ago, the Council reviewed the importance of holding an international conference on the Great Lakes region. We would renew our appeal to all States of the region to participate in that conference, which could bring about the goal we are pursuing in the subregion, namely, that of achieving peace, security, stability, cooperation and development.

My delegation supports all regional, subregional, national and international efforts to deal with the major challenges facing Central Africa, to resolve armed conflicts, to prevent the transfer of weapons across national borders, to dismantle armed groups, to help refugees, to supply all necessary humanitarian assistance to peoples of the region, and to help the States of the region to combat poverty. Despite the vast natural resources of that subregion, it is in fact prevented from drawing any benefit from its resources to further its development.

We believe that the Security Council's support for the peace process in the Central African subregion is an urgent and indispensable task. The States of the subregion cannot face all these challenges alone. We have seen this in the case of Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other States. Consequently, it is imperative for the international community to provide economic assistance to the States of the subregion to help them deal with their challenges and overcome obstacles in economic and development areas.

In conclusion, we highly appreciate the efforts of the economic community of the States of the region, as well as the efforts of the United Nations office, towards overcoming the difficulties faced by the countries of Central Africa.

Ms. Menéndez (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open meeting on the Central African region. Thanks also go to Mr. Kalomoh for presenting the interim report of the multidisciplinary assessment mission to the Central African subregion (S/2003/1077), which took place in June.

My delegation associates itself with the statement to be made shortly by the representative of Italy, speaking on behalf of the European Union. Therefore, I shall confine myself to a few brief additional comments.

We agree with the analysis made in the report regarding identification of the principal challenges faced by the region. The challenges to peace and security, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the lack of development, HIV/AIDS, the human rights situation and the precariousness of the humanitarian situation are the most urgent of those challenges. A comprehensive and effective response to all of those issues requires an integrated subregional approach.

In that connection, we support the review of the United Nations programmes in the region, mentioned in the report's introduction, as a way to improve the consistency and effectiveness of the Organization's activities in Central Africa. We hope to receive subsequent information from the Secretariat on that point. We agree with the report that the United Nations has structures in the region at its disposal, and therefore it is preferable to make effective and coordinated use of the existing structures before considering the possibility of establishing new ones.

I shall refer briefly to a number of the elements identified in the report of the Secretary-General — specifically, some of the principal challenges to peace and security; the effective implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes that take the subregional dimension into account; the importance of the reform of security structures; the proliferation of small arms and light weapons; and finally, the issue of human rights.

With regard to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, it is essential that national programmes be strengthened through initiatives at the subregional level. Therefore, we are pleased to observe that progress has been made in implementing the Multicountry Demobilization and Reintegration Programme in the Great Lakes region for the period 2002-2006. At the same time, we believe the report of the Secretary-General contains interesting recommendations concerning the possible

establishment of joint DDR programmes in border zones and with respect to an integrated approach — at the level of the whole United Nations system and in cooperation with other humanitarian and development agencies — aimed at facing the challenges of DDR.

Secondly, with regard to security sector reform and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, we again emphasize the importance of a subregional approach in achieving effective security reform and reducing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the movement of armed elements among the countries of the region.

Finally, regarding the human rights situation, the report contains a series of recommendations that merit consideration, including, for example, those concerning the fight against impunity and the link between reform of the judicial system and human rights issues.

Mr. Thompson (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open meeting. Our thanks also go to Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh for his presentation of the report of the mission (S/2003/1077).

In my remarks, I will be supplementing and speaking within the framework of the statement to be made shortly by the Italian presidency of the European Union.

A year ago, the Council proposed the inter-agency mission because we recognized the need for a comprehensive and concerted approach to the issues of peace, security and development in Central Africa. The aim was, and remains, to make effective operational linkages across the United Nations system and, where relevant and practical, across borders. We should continue to pursue that. In my remarks, I want to address how we do that rather than the particular problems of the region, which — as previous speakers have said — are large and urgent.

The mission concluded that, as a result of cross-cutting and other challenges that transcend national boundaries in the region, an integrated and holistic subregional approach is required to complement national solutions and lay a durable foundation for solutions. The report offers us a range of cross-regional issues for consideration, many of which are being addressed by different parts of the United Nations system. In our discussion of the Great Lakes region last week, for example, we all recognized that certain problems do not stop at national borders, particularly where those borders are highly porous. Small arms proliferation is one example. On a more positive note, I hope we are starting to see the potential, at least, for a positive cycle in the Great Lakes region in which one country can positively affect development in its neighbours.

But, that said, I think there are some important qualifications to a blanket cross-regional approach. Clearly, some problems are fundamentally the same on either side of a national border and need to be tackled in a coordinated way. But others may be best tackled at the national level, and some issues — such as HIV/AIDS — clearly need to be addressed in a much broader context than just the Central African region. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) provides a framework for shared progress across a wide range of areas — including peace and security, economic governance, and democracy and good governance — that goes beyond the Central African region. So, as a first point, we need to be careful about imposing templates on different kinds of problems.

Moreover, as a second point, we would not wish to cut across or duplicate existing regional and subregional initiatives — for example, the current work on the potential for an international conference on the Great Lakes. So it follows that we would not support the insertion of a new level of bureaucracy into the region. A better way forward might be to concentrate on areas that build on existing subregional and region-wide structures, rather than attempting to create new ones.

The third point, therefore, is that there is a clear role for subregional bodies, and they deserve our support. It is unsurprising that the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC) have established mechanisms and approaches to address issues of collective security. The economic development of the region and security are fundamentally linked. At the same time we note the observation of the multidisciplinary mission that not all of these mechanisms are either fully functional or delivering as intended. We need to be sure that each part of the system is playing to its strengths and not duplicating. The Central African subregional organizations need to define their role according to where they can best add value. We note that the report

identifies some blurring between the roles of ECCAS and CAEMC, for example.

As the Secretary-General moves forward with his proposed review of the United Nations programmes in the region, it would be useful to focus on particular areas where there is the best prospect of identifying scope for improved coordination. We think it would be useful to see some specific recommendations — for example, concerning which of the regional security structures the United Nations should be supporting, and how that support could best be provided. We would welcome a look at what scope there may be to follow through on the Council's earlier intention to support ECCAS's new collective security structures. It would be helpful to have recommendations on whether there is anything more concrete that the United Nations could contribute in other areas — for example, tackling the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Finally, in addressing concrete proposals, we would urge a bottom-up approach, taking account of the views of those already working in the field in partnership with Governments in the region. We think this is key. Any review should be looking at what does or does not work in the field, and at where there may be gaps or opportunities for better linkage in the existing activities of the United Nations system. We hope that such an approach will deliver progress in making the Organization more joined up and helping the countries of the Central African region in their efforts also to be more joined up.

Mr. Konuzin (Russian Federation *(spoke in Russian)*: Today's meeting is further confirmation of the serious concern of the world community in quickly finding a solution to the conflicts and the many problems in Africa. It is also evidence of our desire to develop an effective strategy for the maintenance of peace and sustainable development in Africa.

The Russian Federation is pleased to see that recently — thanks primarily to the efforts of the Africans themselves, but also thanks to the international community, the United Nations, the Security Council, the regional and subregional organizations — it has been possible to achieve tangible success in the settlement of conflicts and in stabilizing the situation in the Central African subregion. Peace is steadily being consolidated in Angola, life is returning to normal in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the peace process in Burundi is moving ahead, and in the Central African Republic measures have been taken to restore the constitutional order.

But at the same time there are still serious risks and difficulties in Central Africa. We noted that the dangers listed in the report of the multidisciplinary mission do not differ from the threats that we have been discussing here in the Security Council. In other words, our analyses are virtually the same, and this provides a certain foundation for multilateral and multifaceted interaction in order to neutralize those risks and dangers.

But what worries us is something else. The main causes of the current situation in Central Africa — unsatisfactory Governments, widespread poverty, a particularly high level of unemployment among young people — have also been the main causes of instability for decades. We have to adjust our focus; we have to ask questions not only about the causes of the present situation, but also why African States are facing the same root causes of instability as they faced as they were approaching independence over 40 years ago.

Then there is a second lesson we can learn. We must listen to the Africans more. The report notes that a number of African countries would be willing to participate in consultations on the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They are requesting that they be admitted as full participants in the proposed international conference on the Great Lakes region. It is the Africans themselves that have to define themselves. They are neighbours; they have to live together as good neighbours.

There is a third point. It is extremely important that international assistance through this process of stabilization be coordinated, focused and accountable. A central role must be played by the United Nations, which would have the closest contacts with the regional and subregional organizations. Those organizations must be purely pragmatic in their functioning, for their very existence is justified only when their work is truly useful. If those organizations need help, then they must be helped.

The report refers to the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. I would like to ask Mr. Kalomoh whether there is any specific output from that Committee. Are the reports of that Committee available?

There is a fourth point. We are worried that some African countries tend to appeal to the international community and the United Nations before fully exhausting their own national or regional possibilities. This applies, as we see it, to perhaps a rather excessive approach for the establishment in Central Africa of a United Nations office, which would be in addition to structures already there. Along the same lines are the requests relating to international commissions for investigating violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law, and structures to combat impunity. Africans could make fuller use of national, bilateral and regional potential. This is mentioned specifically in the report of the multidisciplinary assessment mission.

We agree that the United Nations system could be of assistance in this respect. Such assistance should be provided first to those who have demonstrated their resolve to solve problems and who are willing to use their own resources as well for this purpose.

The Russian delegation supports the measures proposed by the Secretary-General to strengthen the role of the United Nations in Central Africa, in particular with regard to the appointment of a special envoy of the Secretary-General to the subregion and the area of competence of such an envoy. We believe that the work of that special envoy would be fully transparent in the Security Council and that information would be provided on his activities through regular reports of the Secretary-General to us.

Mr. Negroponte (United States of America): We join others in thanking Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh for his comprehensive report on the multidisciplinary assessment mission to Central Africa regarding the need for an integrated approach to issues of peace, security and development in the Central Africa region. As you know, we have been a long-time supporter and financial contributor to peace and development projects in Central Africa, both bilaterally and multilaterally. We are greatly pleased that the peace processes in a number of Central African States, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola and Burundi, have made significant progress in recent years. Forward movement in those peace processes should allow for better opportunities to institutionalize stability, along with economic progress, in the Central African region.

We are also pleased that there have been some significant economic changes in certain Central African States. For example, the Chad-Cameroon pipeline and oil exploration and production in Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe should provide further opportunities to Central Africa for economic advancement. However, to take advantage of those opportunities, those countries, as well as the rest of the Central African States, must make a concerted effort to invest in infrastructure and the health, education and well-being of their populations. Governments must ensure the protection of human rights and the transparent and judicious use of national funds for targeted and comprehensive development programmes.

We would recommend that the decision on naming a special envoy be deferred until after the Great Lakes conference has issued its results and recommendations. Many Central African countries will be involved in the Great Lakes conference, and the United Nations-African Union partnership in the conference has already committed to encouraging and coordinating the contributions of various regional and subregional African organizations. Therefore the conference, with the stated goals of promoting sustainable peace, political stability, economic development and regional integration, may incorporate many critical elements laid out in the multidisciplinary assessment mission report, and may in fact recommend ways to enhance Central African integration and strengthen its regional organizations.

We would also be concerned that adding yet another bureaucratic layer to the United Nations structures already in the Central African region might not necessarily ensure better coordination of existing United Nations bodies in the region and could cause confusion as to the responsibilities of existing United Nations representatives. A more effective response might be to ensure that United Nations offices, missions and agencies already in the region be challenged to work more effectively together.

Mr. Maquieira (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are very grateful for the report of the multidisciplinary assessment mission to the Central African subregion, headed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Kalomoh, and we are also grateful for his briefing today.

Briefly, it seems to us that, in the light of the report, which we have studied, it would be appropriate to introduce holistic solutions taking account of the regional dimension, especially in areas that are clearly affected by similar cross-border problems. Trafficking in small arms, the proliferation of mercenaries who cross borders to offer their services to the highest bidder, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, systematic violations of human rights, HIV/AIDS and extreme poverty — none of these phenomena can be resolved by countries acting alone, especially without the cooperation of the international community or the United Nations. That is why it seems to us entirely logical to pursue proposals aimed at the more active presence of the United Nations, supporting the implementation of subregional measures aimed at the resolution of general problems, including the promotion of good governance; joint and coordinated disarmament programmes; demobilization, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement programmes; and measures to combat the illegal movement of small arms, drugs and militias — ideas that, as we know, are under discussion in the context of other African conflicts.

Of the recommendations made by the mission, we would like to emphasize those that relate to the need to establish a mechanism to alleviate the suffering of the victims of human rights violations, including through reparation and compensation, as part of efforts aimed at post-conflict reconciliation — an area to which Chile attaches fundamental importance. Given our recent history, we know how important it is to have a process of democratic recovery, stability and peace, to prevent impunity and to address the suffering of the victims of human rights violations.

We believe that the recommendations relating to governability contained in the report of the multidisciplinary mission are important. Thus the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council must coordinate their action in order to ensure a coherent approach to the integrated and multidimensional aspects of the problems of the region. Progress has been made in that area, but we have not yet come up with an operational formula facilitating the joint work of the two organs.

At the same time, it seems to us reasonable to heed the concern of the Secretary-General regarding the proliferation of United Nations offices in the region — a theme taken up by a number of speakers in the recent debate dealing with the conference on the Great Lakes region. We must set clear and achievable goals, draw up a specific timetable and avoid any duplication of functions.

Mr. Pujalte (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I am grateful for the inclusion in our programme of work of a meeting on the Central African region. We recognize the work and leadership of the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Kalomoh, who led the assessment mission to the region and produced the report before us today.

As the report makes clear, the problems faced by the region will be difficult to resolve. Indeed, these are persistent problems not only in Africa, but in several parts of the world. The first of these — and the most complex, given its repercussions in all areas — is that of extreme poverty. The second is the proliferation of and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, explosives and munitions. That is an issue of great sensitivity, given its impact on human rights, especially among populations that need special protection, such as women and children. The third problem, which is related to conflict, is the massive flows of refugees.

Countries like Angola — your country, Mr. President — Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda are already making efforts to consolidate their internal stability. To that end, they need to improve economic conditions and create institutions that reinforce their Governments.

In our view, the recommendations contained in the report with a view to designing and implementing a comprehensive approach to conflict in Central Africa — including aspects relating to ethnic disputes; flows of internally displaced persons and refugees; the illegal exploitation of natural resources; illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons; and the use of children as combatants — must be taken into account by the Council as it seeks solutions that have not only a regional, but, as the report stresses, a comprehensive dimension.

The national capacities of the countries of the region must be strengthened with a view to promoting good governance, including the consolidation of justice systems and the formulation of human rights policies. The support that can be provided by the United Nations requires the participation of, and cooperation by, African Governments, regional organizations and the

international community as a whole. In this way it will be possible to continue to set priorities and determine the actions that need to be taken in the region in order later to create, optimize and coordinate effective strategies and programmes that will help countries to overcome the challenges faced by the region and contribute to its development.

The Security Council has already begun to incorporate actions to strengthen the institutional capacity of States within the mandates of peacekeeping operations. That trend should be continued and consolidated. Direct cooperation with other regional organizations and competent bodies is also necessary.

In Central Africa, a region where more than half of the population lives below the poverty line and which has nearly 3 million displaced persons, urgent measures are required to prevent the existing humanitarian crisis in the region from continuing to deteriorate. It is necessary also to capitalize on the benefits that can be provided by the region's wealth of resources.

The international community has a commitment to help the countries of the region, whose economic, political and social development depends not only on the will of Governments involved but also the coordinated efforts of international, regional and subregional organizations.

It is only through the joint and coordinated efforts of a strategic partnership for development imbued with a high degree of political will that it will be possible successfully to resolve the problems which thus far have caused so much harm to many African countries. The Security Council must continue closely to follow up activities to promote peace-building and to provide its support to such efforts.

The President: I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Angola.

I wish to thank the Secretariat for its very comprehensive report following the assessment mission to the region, which gives us a clear picture of the problems and an indication of possible solutions to them.

I should like in particular to commend Mr. Kalomoh and the members of the mission for their efforts and for the quality of the data they have produced on the region.

I should like also to avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate Cameroon and Ambassador Belinga-Eboutou, under whose presidency the Security Council adopted the presidential statement on 31 October 2002 calling for a mission to that region.

I would like to thank in advance the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo for the statement he will deliver on behalf of all members of the Economic Community of Central African States. My delegation fully subscribes to and supports that statement.

Moreover, my delegation would like to comment on the third paragraph of the summary of the report, which states:

> "The mission concluded the visit to the subregion with a strong sense of a striking paradox, namely, that Central Africa is potentially one of the richest subregions in Africa but also contains the largest number of States that fall among the lowest in almost all human development indices." *(S/2003/1077, p.3)*

The report refers also to a complex of problems affecting the region, such as the proliferation of small arms, the lack of infrastructure, and others. It is true that, to overcome that paradox, a comprehensive, integrated and resolute approach to the complex of problems of the region is needed, as rightly indicated in the conclusion of the Secretariat's report. Meanwhile, this can be achieved if the problems are addressed in a solidly grounded and integrated framework. The dispersion that currently characterizes the institutions which serve the Central African region must be addressed so as to make them more effective and results-oriented.

Central Africa, potentially one of the richest regions of the continent, has the means to overcome its problems if the new trend towards peace and security in the region is sustained and an integrated and holistic approach is followed in addressing the problems currently plaguing the region. A more concerted effort by the Central African countries is needed in which ownership by States will have to be complemented by better-coordinated support by the international community.

It is my delegation's hope that today's meeting of the Security Council can be viewed as a contribution by Angola towards this common endeavour of

promoting peace, security and development in Central Africa as well as throughout the world.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

In order to optimize the use of our time, I will not individually invite speakers to take seats at the Council table. When a speaker is taking the floor, the Conference Officer will seat the next speaker on the list at the table.

I give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia; the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey; and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this statement.

Allow me once again to congratulate you, Sir, for the strong leadership Angola has shown during its November 2003 presidency of the Security Council, especially on African issues. I also wish to thank Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh for the comprehensive and well-structured report of the multidisciplinary assessment mission to the Central African subregion which he headed in June 2003.

As appropriately noted in the report, Central Africa is potentially one of the richest subregions in Africa, but it also contains the largest number of States at the bottom of almost any human development index. Moreover, seven of the 11 countries visited by the United Nations mission are either in conflict or post-conflict situations, and the subregion as a whole continues to suffer from the proliferation of small arms and armed groups; high unemployment among young people, which pushes them into banditry or armed mercenary activities; underdeveloped infrastructures; great numbers of displaced persons and refugees; poor human rights records; and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

As stressed during last week's public debate on the Great Lakes region, the European Union strongly shares the view that the fundamental problems affecting the Central African subregion can be tackled only through an integrated regional approach to the main cross-cutting issues. Such an approach requires more effective subregional cooperation and integration to be promoted by strengthening the mechanisms set up by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, the early warning mechanism for Central Africa and the Central African multinational force. We are fully aware of the importance of African ownership in that process. The coordination and consistency of ECCAS with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and African Union policies and mechanisms, as well as with other relevant subregional organizations in the area, is also of the utmost importance.

In addition to ensuring regional ownership within the processes of stabilization and economic growth in Central Africa, we must continue to mobilize international support. While the Governments of the region bear the primary responsibility for consolidating peace and ensuring development, the international community has a duty to assist them at all levels. The European Union stands ready to perform this task.

The European Union notes with satisfaction the recent positive developments in the main crisis areas of the subregion, namely the Great Lakes countries, as stressed a few days ago during the public debate. Moreover, the quick restoration of constitutional rule in Sao Tome and Principe after the attempted coup d'état in July 2003, and the partial improvement of the situation in the Central African Republic, attest to the fundamental role of regional organizations and the growing determination of African leaders to promote democratic governance and the rule of law.

The European Union is fuliy committed to continue boosting the peace and stabilization process in Central Africa. As you know, operation Artemis succeeded in stabilizing security conditions, improving the humanitarian situation and protecting the civilian population of Bunia in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The rapid deployment of the European multinational force, the first ever outside European boundaries, we must recall, halted the dangerous downward spiral of security conditions and helped reactivate the peace process in that country. This European Union-led military operation provides further tangible evidence of the European Union's commitment to stability and security in the Central African subregion and on the African continent as a whole.

On the other hand, the report stresses that in the Great Lakes region alone, there are more than 1 million illegal small arms in circulation and that disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of former combatants are proceeding at a very slow pace. We believe that without a comprehension regional solution to those problems, any peace and stabilization effort will inevitably fail in the long term. In this regard, the European Union welcomes all national, subregional and international initiatives to strengthen the capacities of the Central African countries, particularly the initiative to convene the international conference for the Great Lakes region.

As a result of the intimate link between poverty and conflict, the international community must help the Central African countries enter the path of durable and sustainable development, thereby eradicating the economic sources of political instability, civil unrest and conflict. Unemployment, heavy external debt and poor infrastructure in the Central African countries can be tackled through good governance and international assistance.

The European Union stands ready to cooperate with the United Nations, the African Union and ECCAS on peace and stabilization processes and the economic development of the Central African subregion. We entirely agree with the report that a global and integrated approach is needed and reiterate our strong support to the Secretary-General for his commitment.

The President: I thank the representative of Italy. I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) *(spoke in French)*: I have the honour to take the floor before the Council on behalf of the following 11 member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), namely Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe and Chad. Earlier, the representative of Cameroon announced that he joined in the statement I am now making. In turn, I wish to say it is rather I who am pleased to join in the brilliant statement that he made, not only on behalf of Cameroon, but on behalf of our subregion.

First I would like to say how proud we are to see you, Sir, presiding over the Council during this month of November, during which important debates will be devoted to the Central African subregion. Last Thursday, 20 November, there was a public meeting devoted to preparations for the international conference on the Great Lakes. Today we have this well-attended debate on the review of the interim report of the United Nations multidisciplinary assessment mission to the Central African subregion in June 2003.

We are grateful to the Council for the interest it has taken in our region. You will recall that following the debate in the Council of 22 October 2002, on cooperation between Central Africa and the United Nations, the decision was taken to send to the subregion an assessment mission. The aim was, and is, the adoption of a global, integrated, resolute, concerted approach to the problems of peace, security and development in Central Africa, as correctly recalled by the Secretary-General in his letter to the Security Council of 10 November 2003. We wish to thank the Secretary-General for having sent this mission and for presenting to us today the report that our Governments have been looking forward to with great interest.

We also wish to commend the members of the mission, especially Mr. Kalomoh, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for the high calibre of work done, which broadly takes into account the concerns expressed by our Governments. We wish to assure him of our determination to continue working with his team in a dialogue aimed at establishing a true and strengthened partnership between our subregion and the United Nations system.

The level of talks held between members of the United Nations delegation and people in each of our countries that were visited, and the high calibre of those exchanges, clearly express the interest taken by leaders of our subregion in strengthening cooperation with the United Nations, especially at a time when solid prospects are emerging from the crisis in most of the countries that have been beset by armed conflicts.

The message we wish to send is one of a Central Africa that wants to emerge from the infernal circle of violence and poverty to firmly commit itself along the path of dispute settlement, consolidated peace-building and reconstruction. But our countries are also aware that despite the determination of their leaders, positive developments now under way will remain fragile if they do not have substantial support from the

international community, particularly from the United Nations.

The Secretary-General recently had occasion to commend the satisfactory progress of the situation in the subregion. We would confirm that trend by pointing to the following developments which occurred since the mission's visit, and which reveal a true determination to move ahead with the settlement of conflicts and the strengthening of subregional integration. I refer, in particular, to the peaceful settlement of the political crisis in Sao Tome and Principe; the organization of the national dialogue in the Central African Republic; the establishment of transitional institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the adoption in New York on 25 September 2003, of the declaration of Principles on Good-Neighbourly Relations and Cooperation, between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda; the recent agreement arrived at in Burundi between the Government and the Forces for the Defense of Democracy, which led, yesterday, to the formation of a new inclusive Government; the entry into force of the protocol pertaining to the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa; the organization in Libreville in July of a peacekeeping operations exercise, and the meeting in Brazzaville in October 2003 of the military chiefs of the subregion with a view to creating a subregional peacekeeping brigade. Those examples clearly indicate that the subregion does not consider war and destablization to be its inexorable fate, but is, on the contrary, more than ever determined to face up to its responsibilities. Still, the challenges remain enormous — as the report clearly underscores — particularly in regard to the maintenance and strengthening of peace. Efforts must be made to strengthen subregional capacities, support subregional initiatives, implement disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, promote national reconciliation, protect human rights, reintegrate refugees and displaced persons and control the illegal movement of small arms within the region. For all of those problems the nagging issue remains one of financing, which I shall revert to later.

Another aspect of that challenge concerns reconstruction and sustainable development, where focus should be placed on the introduction of post-conflict programmes that allow for the transition from policies geared towards emergency humanitarian aid to ones centred on structural development, good governance, poverty reduction, combating HIV/AIDS and malaria, rehabilitation of ecosystems devastated by war, strengthening of mechanisms of community integration and so forth. Here, again, there is a need to stress the mobilization of external resources.

With regard to those challenges, and the many others we face, we feel that it is absolutely imperative to have a subregional, coordinated approach. We must find a way to coordinate our activities and our efforts, to mobilize all of the key actors involved in the process — Governments, parliaments, non-governmental organizations, civil society, subregional integration organizations, business sectors and so forth — around a coherent vision so that we may address our external partners as a united entity. In that connection, we have to be able to deal with United Nations interlocutors who are willing to see our problems from a perspective that takes into account that common identity that we wish to forge.

Particular interest needs to be shown for programmes that have a multinational dimension, like that led by the World Bank for the financing of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities in some of our countries.

The new partnership with the United Nations that we aspire to is a function of that concern, and it is to further that objective that we make the following comments, which are far from being exhaustive given the breadth and complexity of the problems under discussion.

In the first place, we reaffirm our determination to strengthen subregional integration by revitalizing the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), which is slated to play the primary role in coordinating all the activities that at present it shares with other institutions such as the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC). In any case, such a situation — which is not specific to Central Africa — is destined to evolve as the subregion achieves an advanced degree of integration, and eventually do away with all structures that have lost their raison d'être. Today, the coexistence of those institutions is not an obstacle. To the contrary, it can help to speed up the integration process for ECCAS, which can benefit from the experience of institutions with proven track records.

Now, as you can see I am entering the debate over competing institutions in Central Africa. But, more

than that, we are dealing with historic processes. The Economic Community of Central African States, which comprises 11 member countries, is only 20 years old, while the Central African Economic Monetary Community has a 40-year history. That institution corresponds to a historic solidarity that is destined to change.

Let me give some specific examples so that we can assess to what degree those institutions have intervened. We have the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, which is essentially a customs union that has not yet been incorporated within the Economic Community of Central African States. We have a regional integration body with community programmes that do not yet exist within ECCAS. We have a common currency, which is already a great step forward — we take Europe as our model and, as we all know, it took many years to launch the euro. We have, therefore, a group of six countries with a common currency, an achievement from which ECCAS can take inspiration. We have, in regard to the free movement of people and goods, a plan for a common passport that will soon be circulated. Those many steps forward can serve as an inspiration to ECCAS as it pursues its own evolution.

Further to those reflections, I should like to note that at one point the persistence of conflicts — which caused many countries to give their full attention to the day-to-day management of those crises — may have left the impression that the communal spirit was breathing its last. We are sure that, today, with those conflicts now at an end, the subregional integration plan will find its second wind.

A second aspect is the question as to whether the structure we have before us will enable us to have a partner with a political presence in our region. I followed the debate on the question with great interest. Let me recall the following. The Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and the United Nations offices and agencies in our countries play an essential role. But, in keeping with the vision of a global, integrated and determined approach to the problems of the subregion — as defined by the Security Council — a coordination mechanism or guidelines for coordination, harmonization and consistency is a necessity. That is why it is important to recall that, in light of that concern, when the assessment mission visited Central Africa, a request was made by our heads of State for the creation of a subregional United Nations office in Central Africa that would constitute a kind of political presence, not just one more office. The representative of Cameroon quite rightly alluded to that request.

The request, first addressed to the assessment mission, was recently repeated in Malabo last month, when the ministers of the 11 member countries of ECCAS met for the twentieth Ministerial Meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

That, then, is where the debate stands with us at this stage. It is a debate on the question of what constitutes a coherent, integrated approach. We do not want to simply add a new form of bureaucracy; we are seeking a solution that takes into account our shared vision of our problems.

As a third issue, we note with great interest the suggestions made by the Secretary-General in his letter of transmission. At the same time we wonder about the purpose of yet another study on the causes of conflict in Africa. Here, again, the representative of Cameroon has been very eloquent. We have enough studies on the issue and we therefore wonder why an additional study is necessary. In any event, we welcome the positive will to strengthen the effectiveness and coherence of United Nations programmes in Central Africa. We are ready, therefore, to continue working with the Secretary-General to examine ways to strengthen the essential partnership between the United Nations and our subregion.

Central Africa agrees with the Secretary-General that we must move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention with regard to peace and security. Central Africa also considers that it is important to develop a logic for follow-up to peace-building and stabilization processes.

In that regard, I would like to emphasize two points by giving two examples. Concerning financing problems and mobilization of external resources, many statements and declarations have been made and many conferences have been held, but in reality we can say that there is many a slip from the cup to the lip. First of all, there are inter-agency consolidated appeals for some of countries of the region, such as Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have noted pledges of aid and financial support, but when it comes to taking action we note that things often move very

slowly to the detriment of the goals to be achieved. Secondly, we also have other selected peacekeeping operations as we have seen over the course of the year in the Central African Republic. The Central African Economic and Monetary Community organized a mission, which was led by the Gabonese head of State. A contingent involving forces from a number of countries was dispatched, but it was faced with the eternal problem of logistics. Naturally, our heads of State turned to the United Nations, and you received them here, some months ago, a delegation sent by the head of State of Gabon, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Defence, pleading their cause, saying that we have a contingent but need the United Nations to take the contingent under its responsibility because we do not have the resources.

The answer was that, given the nature of the intervention and in the absence of a Security Council resolution, it was not possible for the United Nations to fulfil that request. You will, of course, understand that our leaders then wonder, when they are told that the maintenance of international peace and security is the responsibility of the Security Council and the United Nations. They are told to organize in the proper manner and report to the United Nations and await an appropriate response. Then, when the response is not along the lines that they would wish, they may well question the true determination of the international community to assist them in their efforts.

This is just to show that in our countries, we do not always stand idly by when a crisis arises. I would indeed say that, with regard to the Central African Republic and other countries, we do not necessarily merely send out a contingent. When we see the causes of destabilization of a country, such as accumulation of salary arrears, our heads of State organize. They collect money to liquidate part of the debts owed to civil servants in order to calm social unrest.

A real will to intervene exists, but it is constrained by the lack of resources. Now what can we say today? We have taken due note of the report and its recommendations, and we say that the time has come, of course, to take action, correctly and without delay, to address all of the problems raised by the assessment mission. We shall do so ourselves in the spirit of the approach formulated by the Council. We shall do so with determination in order to make irreversible the positive steps that we can all observe and to avoid any backsliding or any renewed challenges.

Central Africa is aware that it can achieve its goals only by strengthening its capacities. We promise to do so, especially through a firmer approach to revitalization of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in the areas of peace, security, economic development and human development. In order to preserve that determination and unity and in order to remain consistent to that global, resolute and integrated approach, our subregion has always wished all its members to be involved in the international conference on peace and security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region, and, we would add, in Central Africa.

In that regard, the member States of ECCAS welcome the statement of the President of the Security Council of 20 November 2003, and welcome the inclusive approach adopted by the Council that is an eloquent illustration of the way in which we wish henceforth to address the problems of our subregion.

Mr. Atoki (Democratic Republic of Congo) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, as your term as President of the Security Council draws to an end, may I congratulate you on the very able, skilful and competent way in which you have chaired the Council. I would also like to thank you for having included Central Africa, our subregion, as one of the main concerns during your term, stressing thereby the strong interest of the Security Council in a geographical area that is potentially one of the richest in the world, but which for over a decade has been devastated by instability and breaches of international peace and security. So I would thank you for organizing this open meeting of the Council to consider the interim report of the interdisciplinary assessment mission to the subregion of Central Africa.

But first of all, I would like to extend my deepest condolences to my colleague and brother from the Central African Republic over the death President David Dacko, who died unexpectedly last week at Yaoundé in Cameroon. The most recent image that we have of President Dacko is the embrace of President Dacko and the current Prime Minister Abel Goumba. That was one of the high points of the Central African National Conference, which symbolized, par excellence, the strong desire for peace and reconciliation of our peoples, both east and west, in the subregion. We are very grateful to President Bozize for having decreed a period of national mourning, and we

thank the Government of Cameroon for authorizing the repatriation of the mortal remains of the late President.

I would like to pay tribute to the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Kalomoh, and all of his team, whom I met personally, and I would thank them for their excellent work and report. I would also thank him for introducing the report this morning.

I would also like to associate myself fully with the statement made by my colleague, the representative of the Republic of the Congo on behalf of the eleven members of the Economic Community of Central African States. With his customary eloquence and clarity, he faithfully stated the position of our community. This makes my task much easier, and I shall confine myself to a few points of great concern to my own country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With regard to peace and security, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the assistance of the Council, the United Nations as a whole and the international community, is firmly and irrevocably committed to a peaceful and non-conflictual transition, with the main objective now being the organization of free, transparent and democratic elections.

With your assistance, it will be possible to realize the reunification and pacification of our country, to preserve our territorial integrity, and to restore State authority throughout the national territory, which must be supported by the rehabilitation of social and economic infrastructures, resumption of free movement for people and goods, and the reopening of the main arteries of communication.

It is of the greatest importance to continue and speed up the process of reforming a restructured, integrated national army in stages, with a precise timetable. The new army should deploy as soon as possible, and my Government greatly appreciates the bilateral and international assistance already provided. The disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration program (DDRR), with assistance from the international community, must also be speeded up.

Since 17 November, without international support, the Congolese armed forces have proceeded with voluntary demobilization and disarmament of over a thousand ex-combatants, primarily of Rwandan nationality. At the close of this operation currently taking place at Kitona base, the ex-combatants will be repatriated to their countries of origin. My Government is calling upon the Governments of origin of those ex-combatants to make arrangements as soon as possible to facilitate the repatriation, reintegration and reinsertion of the ex-combatants at home.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo will spare no effort to make sure that all foreign troops leave the national territory. The Government will constantly be reminding the international community of its responsibilities on DDRR, particularly in the context of the Multicountry Demobilization and Re-insertion Programme for the Great Lakes region being coordinated by the World Bank.

Another concern is the circulation of weapons. The Democratic Republic of the Congo hopes that the Security Council will decide as soon as possible to establish an embargo mechanism pursuant to the relevant provisions of resolution 1493 (2003).

In addition, in his report, the Assistant Secretary-General notes that several of his interlocutors believed that the re-establishment of lasting stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was a sine qua non condition of lasting stability throughout the subregion. To that end, they had requested that they be allowed to participate fully in the international conference on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region and Central Africa.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo fully agrees with that view. We consider the holding of the forthcoming forum to be a historic opportunity to get subregional integration started again. It is a factor for the peace and socio-economic development of our people.

Like the French delegation, we believe that being fully open to our Western neighbours — and, indeed, to all of our neighbours — is a precondition for success at the conference. We also fully agree with the proposal made by the delegation of the Russian Federation on Thursday concerning participation by the national and international private sectors in the preparation of concrete development projects and in the consideration of legal means to exploit the natural resources of our subregion.

Turning now to poverty and humanitarian issues, I would note that, as the Assistant Secretary-General so rightly stressed, if trust is not restored among the

leaders of the subregion, then the economic integration so essential to lasting growth will not be able to play its crucial part in eliminating poverty. The United Nations has a major role to play in restoring such relations of trust, since the gaping wounds left by many years of instability are far from healed.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the humanitarian situation in areas affected by armed aggression is purely and simply shocking, devastating and catastrophic. The lack of access to populations in need and insecurity caused by the aggressors and their associates, the outlaw warlords, remain major obstacles to large-scale humanitarian assistance. The situation is worsening in the eastern part of the country, especially in Ituri and North and South Kivu. It is imperative that bold measures be taken to ensure unhindered access to those areas and to facilitate the distribution of humanitarian assistance where needed.

What the Democratic Republic of the Congo truly needs, however, as I said during the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal launched by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, is a United Nations humanitarian Marshall Plan to offset the terrible impact of the devastating armed aggression that disrupted the stability and socio-economic development of the country and unleashed violence, the destruction of infrastructure, disease — including HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis — and malnutrition. There have also been serious and indelible repercussions for women, children, the elderly and other vulnerable people.

At the economic level, the common vision of our economic and social transition programme is based on a market economy and the recognition of private investment, social rights, national solidarity and juridical and legal security for business. Our paramount objective remains stabilization and economic recovery, stressing in particular ongoing economic rehabilitation and reconstruction and the fight against poverty, with the support of the international financial institutions and the donor community.

As for justice and human rights issues, what is important now is to end impunity. The elimination of impunity requires addressing the root causes of belligerence in the subregion and providing justice for the thousands of Rwandans of all different ethnic groups who have suffered genocide and for the millions of Congolese victims of armed aggression. The elimination of impunity requires the establishment, with the assistance of the Security Council, of an international criminal court for the Democratic Republic of the Congo or an ad hoc tribunal on the model of that for Sierra Leone. Either court must have the competence necessary to adjudicate crimes of genocide; crimes against humanity, including the use of rape as a weapon of war; and mass violations of human rights, regardless of whether the perpetrators are Congolese or foreigners. It must also cooperate closely with institutions that support democracy, such as the National Observatory for Human Rights, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission.

The elimination of impunity also requires appealing to international agencies for compensation for the victims of aggression, as recognized by the international community — particularly this Council and the African Union. It also requires pursuing and completing the process of judiciary reform — including military justice — in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In conclusion, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is highly aware, as it emerges from a long war with many international ramifications, of the importance of regional and subregional cooperation. We are convinced of the need to pool our resources so as to contribute to economic integration and we intend to pursue a policy of dialogue, openness, friendship, cooperation and good-neighbourliness. Our most valuable resource is our human resource – our competent young people, who are perfectly capable of assuming the reins of the nation. This asset is a good outlet for the domestic and external markets and a major factor for economic dynamism.

At the geographical level, everyone knows that our country has agricultural, mineral and water resources that are potentially very conducive to the comprehensive development of the entire subregion. This potential must be used better to ensure a better future for our people. My country, in response to the explicit request of our heads of State, has therefore told the Secretary-General that we are very willing to host in Kinshasa the United Nations office for Central Africa, in the belief that the United Nations must now take a forward-looking approach to the problems of Central Africa and address them in a comprehensive and integrated manner. This offer is, of course, subject to any decision that the Secretary-General may take in

that respect and to prior discussion among the countries of Central Africa.

The President: I thank the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for his kind words addressed to me.

I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Shalita (Rwanda): This being the first time my delegation has taken the floor in the Security Council this month, I would like to begin by warmly congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council and to congratulate you on the very able manner in which you have chaired its work. I would also like to express our thanks for your convening this meeting and that earlier this month on the Great Lakes region.

We would also like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Kalomoh, for presenting the interim report of the multi-disciplinary assessment mission to Central Africa and to congratulate him on the success of the mission. We find the report to be wide-ranging and comprehensive, focusing as it does on issues of peace and security, economic development, humanitarian affairs, human rights and HIV/AIDS.

It is indeed a great tragedy that, while Central Africa has the human and natural resource potential to make it among the richest subregions of the world, it is among the world's poorest subregions, blighted by extreme poverty, hunger, disease and ignorance. Both cause and effect of this are political instability, internal strife and nations with very weak State structures. Rwanda fully supports the mission's view that, as a result of the cross-cutting challenges that transcend national boundaries, an integrated and holistic subregional approach is required to complement national solutions to the numerous challenges that affect Central Africa.

There have been important positive developments in the region over the last few months. My country, Rwanda, is a very good example. We held free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections in August and September, ending the nine-year transition process, and consolidated the national democratization programme that began in 1998 with elections at the grass-roots level of administration. Today, all levels of administration have been democratized and elected local Governments have been empowered by a decentralization programme that aims at giving them a leading role in the decision-making process. Sections of our population that for generations had been marginalized, such as women, are now playing an active role in the political process. In that connection, it gives me great pleasure to note that Rwanda now has the highest percentage of elected women representatives in national parliament, comprising 48.8 per cent of the National Assembly and 30 per cent of the Senate.

The elections in Rwanda came after a constitution-making process, which for the first time in our history involved the entire population in the drafting process. A dynamic and progressive national unity and reconciliation programme has been ongoing for six years now and has made significant progress in helping heal the wounds of the past while reminding us of what we must do to ensure that those mistakes are not repeated.

We also welcome the positive developments taking place in Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Sao Tome and Principe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the formation of a new transitional Government of national unity has given that country its first realistic prospects for peace and stability in many years. Those developments give us optimism for the entire Central African region.

Rwanda shares the mission's observation about the link between poverty and conflict. We therefore also agree on the need to develop holistic and integrated strategies to address the problems of the region.

We welcome and strongly support the ongoing preparations for the conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region. We recognize that the approach of the conference must, in a holistic manner, address the present challenges to peace and security in the region on the one hand, and on the other reflect on the measures that need to be taken at the national, regional and global levels to transform our economies and give the people of Central Africa hope for a better life. That holistic approach should consider that one of the major challenges to peace and security at present is the existence of large numbers of armed and dangerous militia in some parts of the subregion. We must focus our attention on how the threats posed by those negative forces can be effectively neutralized.

With regard to economic transformation, a holistic approach must look at issues such as the marginalization of Africa in general, and Central Africa in particular, in the global trading system and look at what international support can be mobilized for education and training to enable those countries to transform their economies by adding value to, and increasing the volume of, their exports.

Finally, HIV/AIDS presents a serious challenge to security and development in the subregion. Given the high level of the cross-border movement of people, we must develop joint strategies to address that growing challenge. Subregional organizations should provide a coordination and reporting function and also act as a focal-point for international support for initiatives to fight the epidemic.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chad.

Mr. Laoteggueinodji (Chad) (*spoke in French*): Mr. Nagoum Yamassoum, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration of Chad, had wished to participate personally in this public meeting on Central Africa, but because of time and scheduling restraints, he was unfortunately not able to come to New York today. He has therefore requested me to present his sincere apologies to the Council. He also asked me to convey his warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for November 2003. My delegation joins in the Minister's message and asks you to convey our sincere congratulations to the delegation of the United States of America for the excellence and quality of its work in presiding over the Council during the past month.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) made by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Congo, the current Chair of ECCAS.

We would also like to add that almost one year ago, Chad, after being accused on several occasions, appeared before the Security Council on 9 December 2002, as the victim of a complaint lodged against it by the former regime of the Central African Republic. On that occasion, my delegation detailed the timeline of the crisis in the Central African Republic to demonstrate that it was a question of an internal crisis. The events that subsequently took place on 15 March 2003 at Bangui confirmed that.

Today, my delegation takes the floor calmly and with hope to welcome the environment of peace and harmony that once again prevails between our two brotherly countries united by geography and history. Under the auspices of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, Chad is proud to make its contribution to strengthening security and social peace in the Central African Republic.

However, we must learn lessons from the painful events suffered by our States if we want to build a happy future for our peoples. The tragic events that have occurred all over Africa are in part a result of the lack of social dialogue at the national level.

My delegation welcomes the fact that the new Central African Republic authorities have quickly understood that and have rapidly committed themselves to the route of national dialogue. The results of their national forum are encouraging for the future of the country.

We observe that wherever national dialogue prevails over the logic of war, there is a real chance to achieve peace — the peace of the hearts and minds of the citizens who desire to live together in national harmony. That is why when national dialogue is weak, we must help to maintain and strengthen it. At stake are the lives of thousands of citizens of Central Africa who die and of those who fall deeper into poverty each day.

The dispatch by the Secretary-General of a multidisciplinary assessment mission to the Central African subregion last June is an initiative that contributes to strengthening national dialogue in member States. My delegation welcomes and supports the interim report of the mission, which contains a comprehensive and pertinent analysis of the situation. My delegation also supports the Secretary-General's proposal to appoint a special envoy to work with our Governments on political questions.

However, my delegation hopes that the appointment of a special envoy is only one step among others. The mission's results could lead to the establishment of a comprehensive, integrated and lasting strategy in which the subregional organizations and the United Nations agencies and programmes operating in Central Africa would work in coordination

on all the political, economic and humanitarian issues of all the States of the subregion. That would be in keeping with the Council's presidential statement, contained in document S/PRST/2002/31 of 31 October 2002.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Ekua Avomo (Equatorial Guinea) (spoke in Spanish): As I am taking the floor for the first time in this prestigious organ of the United Nations, I wish first to thank Ambassador Gaspar Martins - - a worthy son and Permanent Representative of the brotherly country of Angola, with which my country maintains and continues to develop excellent relations of friendship and cooperation — for presiding over this meeting dedicated to the Central African subregion, at a time of concern and uncertainty due to the multiple and difficult events that today afflict the international community.

Nevertheless, your perspicacity and your many personal attributes can only inspire optimism on our part that positive results will be achieved in the course of your presidency of the Security Council, particularly on the items being considered at this meeting. I wish to extend our congratulations to all the other members of the Security Council, to whom I pay tribute, and to the Secretary-General and the entire United Nations system for their great work and efforts in support of security, peace and stability in the world.

Furthermore, I fully subscribe to the statement made by the representative of the Republic of the Congo, who spoke on behalf of the member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

The statement issued a year ago on 31 October 2002 by the presidency of the Security Council, which, at the time, was occupied by another son of Africa, the representative of Cameroon, was an initiative that Equatorial Guinea and the countries of Central Africa welcomed. It was aimed at examining and addressing in a comprehensive, resolute and integrated way the problems of peace and security and related problems of development in Central Africa. A year after that event, we can only feel reassured at the holding of this meeting devoted to an analysis of the report of the multi-disciplinary assessment mission, which the Secretary-General had decided at that time to send to the area. I wish to express thanks to Mr. Kalomoh and all the members of the assessment mission for the high calibre of their report. I therefore endorse the comments that were made by the representative of Cameroon with regard to this report. We would request that those suggestions and comments be duly considered.

Indeed, that report, which substantially identifies and brings together the problems of the subregion regarding peace and security as well as strategies for economic integration, humanitarian issues, and combating HIV/AIDS, constitutes a diagnosis of the causes of the spiral of violence that has beset virtually every country of the subregion during the last decade. Endowed with immense and important natural resources and with considerable potential in human resources, Central Africa, despite the efforts made by its leaders, paradoxically still remains far from attaining its aspirations of peace and security. This is due to the many internal wars, unjustified wars, which are often not in the interests of the populations of their countries and thus hamper the economic integration of the subregion.

Accordingly, let me stress that, for the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, whose Government devotes all efforts to the maintenance of peace and security in the subregion, this meeting reaffirms and concretely and clearly reasserts the great responsibility and preponderant role that the United Nations Charter identifies and confers upon the Security Council. This role is assigned to it in view of the fact that it is the organ entrusted with protecting and guaranteeing international peace and security, wherever they may be threatened. We wish to centre and maintain this engagement and focus given the alarming situation that prevails in Central Africa. This is an area besieged by a proliferation of persistent crises, conflicts and focal points of presumed or declared tension that undoubtedly collectively represent a real threat to peace and constitute a serious obstacle to the colossal and unceasing efforts of the States of the subregion to face various challenges. These challenges must be faced in order to achieve the goals of political, economic and social development of the peoples of these countries.

Therefore, as the country currently presiding over the Advisory Committee, we would express our appreciation for the excellent work carried out in the last 11 years by the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, in

keeping with the resolutions of the General Assembly. Let me indicate in this connection that various organs established, such as the early warning mechanism for Central Africa and the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), will soon be operational, once member States have completed the necessary procedures. Both by conviction and vocation, Equatorial Guinea has fully associated itself with this effort, in order to make its modest contribution in the search for and consolidation of peace and stability in Central Africa.

After a long bleak period characterized by wars and political instability, we can fortunately now glimpse a ray of light and a sense of hope among the countries that have been victims of this violence, as can be seen in recent events in Angola, Burundi, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. This hope is due to the effort and awareness of these countries, supported by the United Nations system in general and other initiatives of different countries, to whom we express our sincere appreciation and gratitude. However, it is premature to have any illusions, given the continuing fragility of the situation, which calls for the adoption of various actions and mechanisms of support in order to ensure the stabilization of the constitutional order as these countries democratize.

Conscious of and without prejudice towards the presence and role of the United Nations in each of the countries fallen victim to the wave of violence, we reiterate that the need for creating a permanent United Nations political office with subregional scope is more than desirable and justified. Its presence would make it possible to experience the reality of the situation on site and to adopt timely preventive policies and measures. In addition to this, it would play the role of coordinating the efforts and initiatives of the countries of the subregion and the United Nations institutions already present in the area. The establishment of such a subregional United Nations structure is one of the recommendations of the twentieth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, from 27 to 31 October 2003.

The President: I thank the representative of Equatorial Guinea for his kind words addressed to me.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the African Union.

Mr. Kébé (African Union) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for having invited the African Union to take part in this debate on the Central African region and to congratulate Angola on having included many African issues on the Council's agenda for the month of November. I also thank Mr. Kalomoh and his multidisciplinary team for their clear, precise and comprehensive report (S/2003/1077), which goes straight to the heart of the problems being endured by Central Africa.

The African Union recognizes that there is a cause-and-effect relationship among bad governance, ethnic and social exclusion and impunity, on the one hand, and tensions, conflicts and insecurity, on the other. We emphasize the need to tackle the underlying causes of the region's conflicts and economic problems. The diagnosis as well as the remedy recommended in the report (S/2003/1077) could be applied to all of Africa's regions and to all African countries.

The paradox here is that Central Africa — which is one of the regions most endowed with potential and economic resources — has been one of the weakest performers with regard to economic development and social integration. However, at the initiative of the region's heads of State, several regional and subregional organizations have been set up. I would mention the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), which is concerned with issues of peace and security as well as economic integration, and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC), which — unlike ECCAS, which covers the region's 11 countries — covers only a limited number of countries and is concerned with much more specific issues. I should also mention that other organizations of a regional nature have a presence in the region, such as the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States. The United Nations is also very present in the region with several missions, offices, programmes and initiatives, the most recent of which is the project of an international conference on the Great Lakes.

I would also mention continental initiatives — two African Union initiatives with regard to peace and security: the Peace and Security Council, now taking shape and becoming operational, which is to coordinate all regional mechanisms dealing with conflict prevention, management and settlement; and another

continental initiative, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), whose programme covers all the problems related to peace and security and economic and social development that were identified in the report.

The African Union is of the view that we must improve and strengthen the capacities of existing regional and subregional organizations — particularly ECCAS — with a view to enabling them to be much more operational and to better address the subregion's problems related to peace, security and economic integration.

The African Union agrees with the analysis brought out in the report — which I believe has met the approval of all those who have spoken in this morning's debate — that, given the diversity of the challenges facing the region, an integrated, comprehensive and resolute approach is needed. The African Union also recognizes that there must be better coordination of all activities and initiatives in the subregion. Such coordination is essential at the vertical level, to prevent duplication, but also at the horizontal level, to harmonize all activities undertaken.

We believe such coordination work to be essential, and we support the request by States of the region that the United Nations ensure a political presence in Central Africa. As to what form such a structure should take, we rely on the flexibility shown by the countries of the subregion that are prepared to consider this issue further with the special envoy to be appointed by the Secretary-General.

In addition to supporting the request by countries of the subregion, the African Union would like to emphasize the fact that the form of such coordination matters less than its efficiency and effectiveness. We also wish to stress that the coordination of all activities undertaken by the various agencies of the United Nations and the organizations it has established is essential.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Nelson Cosme, Deputy Secretary-General for Political Affairs of the Economic Community of Central African States.

Mr. Cosme (Economic Community of Central African States) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to address the Security Council on behalf of the Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

At the outset, let me express to you, Sir, our congratulations on the exemplary and competent way in which you have guided the work of the Security Council during November — a month full of symbolism for the Republic of Angola and for you, its worthy representative.

I also wish to thank Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General, for his prompt decision to send a multidisciplinary mission to Central Africa to look into ways and means of implementing a comprehensive, integrated, resolute and agreed-upon approach to the problems of peace, security and development in the subregion. At the same time, I wish also to sincerely thank the Security Council for all the support it has given that initiative. ECCAS, the beneficiary of the mission, is fully prepared to provide any other additional contribution it can within the context of implementing decisions that will be taken by the Council in that regard.

Much positive work has been accomplished through the joint efforts of ECCAS and the United Nations, thanks to the tireless efforts that the United Nations system continues to make in our subregion, so afflicted by the many conflicts experienced by many of our countries, whose consequences are still being felt today.

I have said that progress is being made in the subregion regarding the collective security mechanism; the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa has become operational.

In that regard, it can never be said too often that ECCAS — working with the United Nations, of course, and other organizations and interested countries — was promptly seized of the situation in the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe at the time of the attempted overturning of the constitutional order on 16 July 2003. ECCAS clearly welcomes the rapid and concerted progress that has resulted.

Aware of the importance of conflict prevention and, if need be, conflict management and settlement in the subregion, the member States of the Community organized, at the end of July this year at Franceville in Gabon, a joint military exercise of simulated peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations called "Biyongho 2003", in which seven member

countries participated. As a first step, we believe that that exercise was a success, and we want to hold that type of exercise regularly, every two years.

A meeting of the Chiefs of Staff of member countries was held in October in Brazzaville to set up a regional brigade in the framework of the Central African Multinational Force and its staff, in accordance with the wishes and the guidelines of the African Union. In this case, the Council's support will be required, and the secretariat is certain that the Council will accord it all due diligence once it has expressed to the Council the relevant priorities and needs.

In order to ensure better prevention of potential conflicts, the ECCAS secretariat, with the European Union's assistance, is working on a study on the best prevention strategy. Therefore, the request in the Secretary-General's report might also find a response here, as was said so eloquently by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cameroon. The consultant carrying out this study is now visiting Community member States. That will make it possible, among other things, to make the Early-Warning Mechanism for Central Africa operational.

All these measures attest to the increasing importance of the peace and security dimension in Central Africa and are encouraging to all our partners.

This year will have seen many joint activities by the two secretariats of the United Nations and ECCAS and in most of our member States, if we consider the many positive initiatives here and there within the member States of Central Africa.

Who could fail to notice the real progress made in consolidating peace, reconciliation and reconstruction in Angola? Who could ignore the extremely helpful measures taken in the Central African Republic, particularly marked by a national dialogue in which the contrition and requests for forgiveness on the part of former leaders could be a pillar of a new era for a single vision and concerted socio-economic development? Who could fail to welcome the giant steps taken by the great country of the Democratic Republic of the Congo towards new horizons, where all the Congolese seem to be moving forward together, particularly in quickly establishing political and military structures? Who could fail to welcome the progress made in the reconciliation and reconstruction process in the Republic of Congo, and, above all, the political will demonstrated by the protagonists of the Sao Tome and Principe crisis, during which ECCAS played an important role of mediation.

The peaceful change of Government on 30 April 2002 in Burundi and the conclusion of a comprehensive agreement in Pretoria between the Burundi Government of Transition and the *Forces pour la défense de la démocratie* are more good news coming from the Central African subregion.

Rwanda, which suffered so much from the 1994 genocide, has now resumed its rightful seat within the concert of nations, having organized presidential and legislative elections.

All these developments testify to efforts of the subregion on behalf of the dynamic now under way in this part of Africa and to the growing importance of the dimension of peace and security in Central Africa.

Members will recall the large ministerial delegation from Central African Member States, mandated by our heads of State, who participated in the Security Council debate on 22 October 2002 and who called for greater and closer cooperation between the United Nations and Central Africa. The Council responded favourably to that call, and we are grateful for that. The mission led by Mr. Kalomoh, whom we congratulate and who visited all the ECCAS members, had talks at the highest level. At that time, all member States and their authorities and the political and civil society leaders of the subregion called for a standing presence of the United Nations through the opening of a regional United Nations office. A regional office capable of helping establish a regional framework should strengthen stability, security, cooperation and sustainable development. Such an office must be able to support not only ECCAS and its collective security mechanisms, but also the regional mechanisms for economic integration. It is in that context that we support the statement by Ambassador Basile Ikouebe, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo, speaking on behalf of the current Chairman of ECCAS, who reaffirmed our member States' resolve to make ECCAS a pillar of regional integration in Central Africa. As he said, Central Africa is not asking for just one more office; rather, it is calling for a structure, which — in keeping with the wishes of the Security Council — would take an integrated and global approach to the problems of the subregion. The Ambassador of Cameroon reiterated that point. That is, indeed, the wish of the States members of ECCAS.

ECCAS is aware of the importance of strategic partnership with the United Nations. We reaffirm our faith in the wisdom of the Security Council with regard to action to implement this global and integrated approach, in accordance with the wishes has already expressed by the Council on this matter.

The President: I thank the Deputy Secretary for Political Affairs of the Economic Community of Central African States for his kind words addressed to me.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kalomoh to respond to comments and questions raised.

Mr. Kalomoh: First of all, I would like to express our appreciation for the understanding and appreciation expressed today with regard to problems related to the situation in Central Africa and to respond very briefly to some of the questions raised.

First, I would like to thank the delegation of Germany for its continued interest in the Central African Republic. I would like to assure it that we have, indeed, visited the Central African Republic — a country that is emerging from conflict.

Secondly, I wish to respond to some of the issues raised by the Ambassador of Cameroon. First, with regard to whether any countries were opposed to the establishment of a permanent office in the subregion, I think it would be wrong to say that there was opposition — as paragraph 9 of the Secretary-General's report indicates. The question was not raised in that fashion. As can be seen, all countries except one expressed the very strong desire for an enhanced United Nations presence in the subregion in the form of an office. I would not want to say that there was opposition, but only that one country did not raise that issue.

Concerns have been expressed about how the Secretary-General intends to respond to the desires expressed by the countries members of the Economic Community of Central African States. The Secretary-General has outlined two immediate steps that he proposes to take. One is to request a further review of the programmes and activities of the United Nations in the region with a view to better coordinating those activities. He will form further views following the report on that review. He also intends to appoint a special envoy to continue further discussions with the leaders in the region on the complex issues of economic integration and political cooperation and on all other issues identified in the report.

I note with encouragement that, notwithstanding some divergence in viewpoints on the immediate course of action that needs to be taken, there is general agreement and recognition of the need for the international community to remain engaged and support the efforts of the countries of the subregion.

I also wish to affirm one point that was made clear to us: the countries are not seeking the support of the international community as a substitute for their own efforts. They were very clear and insistent on that point. But they want their efforts to be supplemented by those of the international community. They are very much aware that they are primarily responsible for development in the region.

I believe that we should continue to support the efforts of the countries of the subregion and the efforts of the Secretary-General as we continue to bring those countries closer and put to an end to the poverty and instability in the region.

I think that I have been able to respond briefly to some of the key issues that were raised. Once again, I express my deep appreciation for the support and understanding that has been expressed for this important region of the African continent.

The President: I thank Mr. Kalomoh for the clarifications that he has provided.

There are no further speakers on my list.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.40 p.m.